

ALCOA BUILDING  
(Regional Enterprise Tower)  
425 Sixth Avenue  
Pittsburgh  
Allegheny County  
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6724  
*PA-6724*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### ALCOA BUILDING (Regional Enterprise Tower)

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- Location: 425 Sixth Avenue, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.
- Significance: The ALCOA building was built from 1951-1953 as the corporate headquarters for the Aluminum Company of America. It is an internationally-known example of a post-World War II International Style corporate tower by the architectural firm of Harrison and Abramovitz. Aluminum is used throughout the skyscraper to promote ALCOA's product.
- Description: The ALCOA building is a thirty-story slab form skyscraper that forgoes historical decoration in favor of the open expression of glass and aluminum panels as sheathing material. A glass and aluminum entrance pavilion with a shed roof sits at one corner. A two-part aluminum clad tower rises to the side and rear of the pavilion. The towers are divided into three vertical bays by a raised seam between panels. Each of these bays is divided by horizontal rows of three square windows. The unusual aluminum frame windows were designed to swivel to ease cleaning. Large rectangular openings topped by a section of unfenestrated aluminum wall cap the towers.
- History: The ALCOA building was built from 1951 to 1953 by the architectural firm of Harrison and Abramovitz with Altenhof and Bown and Mitchell and Ritchey. It is an important example of the post-World War corporate tower that signaled the embrace of International Style architecture by major American companies. In addition to providing downtown office space, the tower served as an advertisement for the Aluminum Company of America's product. According to *Twentieth Century Building Materials*, the ALCOA building's aluminum sheathing was presented as an alternative to the popular glazed curtain wall of the 1950s. Here the tower is clad in one-story-high prefabricated panels of pressed and anodized sheet aluminum.
- Harrison and Abramovitz were also well-known as the architects of several major projects in the post war period such as the United Nations Headquarters in New York City.

Sources: Thomas Jester, ed. *Twentieth Century Building Materials*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995.

Franklin Toker. *Buildings of Pittsburgh*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007.

Historian: Lisa Pfueller Davidson, HABS Historian, 2006.

Project

Information: This short form history was prepared to supplement photographic documentation of western Pennsylvania for the *Buildings of Western Pennsylvania* publication, part of the *Buildings of the United States* series published by the Society of Architectural Historians and the University of Virginia Press. Large-format photography was sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey through a cooperative agreement with the Society of Architectural Historians. Historical information was provided to the HABS office prior to publication of the book.